



FACTSHEET

Seniors Live and Learn Independently at Neighborhood Networks Centers

DELIVERING TECHNOLOGY ACCESS TO AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES



Neighborhood Networks centers make a positive impact in America's communities.

Neighborhood Networks centers nationwide offer seniors a venue to learn basic computer skills, receive assistance for their unique social and healthcare needs, and engage in recreational activities.

For example, Washington Shaw, a senior citizen, first stepped into the Sister Mary Lucy Neighborhood Networks Center in Denver, Colorado, with virtually no knowledge of computers. After learning the fundamentals of computer operation, Shaw improved his typing, learned how to use Microsoft Office applications and the Internet, and opened an e-mail account, which he uses to communicate with his friends.

What role do seniors play at Neighborhood Networks centers?

Seniors are the primary population at 30 percent of HUD assisted and insured properties with Neighborhood Networks centers. This translates to thousands of potential participants for center programs. In addition to benefiting from center programs, seniors can contribute by tutoring young residents in center afterschool programs.

Neighborhood Networks centers address senior issues

Issues unique to aging populations include increased need for health services, social services, and guidance on retirement finances; increased leisure time following

retirement; reduced mobility and income; and age discrimination when seeking employment.

Neighborhood Networks centers provide a variety of programs and services, including social services, healthcare programs, and recreational activities to address the needs of seniors.

Social services. The Paradise at Parkside Neighborhood Networks Center, Washington, D.C., collects food items from the federal government's Commodities Food Program and distributes them to seniors and other residents once a month. "By doing this, we help seniors overcome transportation barriers," says Dorian Simpson, center director. "It's difficult for them to find transportation to collect the items so we do it for them. We also have a 'brown bag' program in which the National Capitol Area Food Bank sends an allotment of food to the center every month for seniors so they don't have to collect it themselves. The staff and I distribute the food items to them," continues Simpson.

Healthcare services. Some Neighborhood Networks centers offer onsite healthcare screenings for seniors. For example, the Pilgrim Place Neighborhood Networks Center, Houston, Texas, provides onsite mammogram screening through St. Luke's Medical Center. "We also have the Greater Houston Medical Equipment Company conduct yearly diabetes seminars for our seniors, many of whom are diabetics," says Donna Ballard, center director. "During



this time, a company representative measures our residents for shoes, checks the in-soles of their shoes, and supplies socks to keep them warm. A podiatrist also visits the center every 3 months to check the feet of our diabetic residents.”

Pilgrim Place also offers small group seminars that provide information on programs such as Medicaid and Medicare. Insurance company representatives conduct the seminars to update seniors on program information and any changes occurring within the programs.

Recreational activities. Aging populations have increased leisure time and sometimes require social interaction and activities to fill this void. Neighborhood Networks centers also act as venues for senior recreational events and offer activities such as game nights, birthday celebrations, and Thanksgiving Fall Fun.

Which national organizations fund programs for aging populations?

Five of the nation’s top organizations providing grants to support the needs of the aging include the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (www.rwjf.org), the Pew Charitable Trusts (www.pewtrusts.com), the Commonwealth Fund (www.cmwf.org), the Surdna Foundation (www.surdna.org/surdna), and the American Federation for Aging Research (www.afar.org). These organizations offer hundreds of grants annually, totaling as much as \$180 million. Visit their Web sites for additional information about grant application requirements and deadlines.

How can I get involved?

Seniors and other residents can organize and participate in social service programs at their Neighborhood Networks centers as students, teachers, and volunteers. Center

staff can develop programs that address aging issues such as reduced mobility and engage seniors in stimulating activities such as Internet classes.

Partner organizations can provide funding and staff with expertise in senior programs and materials. Materials may include high-tech equipment such as Pentium computers or basic supplies such as books for continuing education classes. These organizations also can collaborate with centers when seeking grants.

Community-based organizations and public housing authorities can encourage their employees and residents to participate in activities at centers that serve senior populations. Some centers are developing joint programs with these groups.

Online resources for seniors

AARP

www.aarp.org

Administration on Aging

www.aoa.gov

American Federation for Aging Research

www.afar.org

Commonwealth Fund

www.cmwf.org

Medicare

www.medicare.gov

National Aging Information Center

www.aoa.dhhs.gov/naic

National Council on Aging

www.BenefitsCheckUp.org

Pew Charitable Trusts

www.pewtrusts.com

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

www.rwjf.org/index.jsp

SeniorNet

www.seniornet.org/php

For more information, contact:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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Copies of this fact sheet are available in Spanish and can be requested from the Neighborhood Networks toll-free Information Center at (888) 312-2743.